



YALI Network

The Fellowship
Application Insider

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The Fellowship Application Insider is a guide for applying to the Mandela Washington Fellowship for YALI Network members based on feedback from 2018 Alumni.

"This is one of the greatest networks any leader can ever enroll in. It is life changing. Attitudes will change. Life will change. Businesses will change. Opportunities will be there for you as a leader because of the Mandela Washington Fellowship."

- Pokyes Richard Sati, Nigeria

At the 2018 Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit, the YALI Network interviewed 22 Fellows – many of whom had applied for the Fellowship several times – to find out what their most important tips were for YALI Network members who will be applying for the Fellowship in the future. The tips we heard the most were simple:

- **Ensure that you meet all of the selection criteria listed in the application instructions.**
- **Make sure to get your application in on time.**

In addition to the above, there were three main themes about how applicants can improve their applications for the Mandela Washington Fellowship:

- **Write About your Impact:** Make yourself stand out as a leader
- **Expand your Network:** Positive relationships can help you improve
- **Be Yourself:** Honestly and effectively representing yourself is important

In this guide you will find quotes from three 2018 Mandela Washington Fellows about the above themes. Additionally, each page contains two links to YALI Network tools to help you improve your application in the ways recommended by the Fellows.

Write About your *Impact*

Make yourself stand out as a leader

A proven record of leadership and accomplishment in public management, business, or civic engagement is among the criteria the Mandela Washington Fellowship selection panels consider when choosing Fellows. Leadership can be hard to prove, so the YALI Network spoke to 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow Wedadu Sayibu to find out how she made herself stand out in the application process.



Wedadu Sayibu

Country: **Ghana**

Fellowship track: **Civic Engagement**

Applied for the Fellowship 3 times before being accepted

Wedadu is the executive director of the Women Support and Activists Group (WOSAG), where she is responsible for supervising and leading program design and implementation to advance the sexual and reproductive health rights of rural women and girls, improving their livelihoods.

"The first time I applied I thought I had enough experience, but unfortunately I wasn't accepted. I thought, **what will I do to stand out as a leader?** Because this whole application is about establishing your [proven track of] leadership."

"[Getting selected] is about telling whoever is reading your application: this is what I am doing. ***This is my contribution to society, to brighten my corner [of Africa] I come from, to solve the social problems that I face.***"

"Telling the story is the difficult part. It is about packaging your story. You know yourself and the kind of work that you do, but there is somebody who is expected to read your story and get connected to it. So it's about telling your story in a way that is compelling and relatable enough to get the attention of the [person reviewing it]."

Do you want to improve your ability to tell your story? You can learn more about how to write an effective personal essay from the YALI Network tools: [Writing a Personal Statement](#) & [Pitching Yourself in the Personal Essay](#).

Increase your Network

Positive relationships can help you improve

Strong social and communication skills are also among the criteria the Mandela Washington Fellowship selection panels consider when choosing Fellows. As such, many of the 2018 Mandela Washington Fellows spoke to the YALI Network about the important role networking can play in helping you improve your application.

Networking with other YALI Network members, Fellowship alumni, professionals in your community, and even the United States Embassy in your country can all provide ways for you to improve your skills. The YALI Network spoke to 2018 Fellow Lillian Moremi to find out how networking helped her grow and improve her application.



Lillian Moremi

Country: **Botswana**

Fellowship track: **Business**

Applied for the Fellowship 4 times before being accepted

Lillian is a youth development practitioner at Career Coaching, a social enterprise she started in 2013 to promote skills development. She focuses on training, coaching, mentoring, and the facilitation of youth development programming. Her dream is to see young Africans positively contributing to the development of the continent and taking the lead in making the world a better place.

"Since I graduated from school, things have been difficult. I've always relied on the people around me. Networking with the U.S. Embassy was very important to me... I now work very closely with the Embassy and even invite them when I have events."

"To members who have not been accepted in the past, I would say that you must try to link up with an alumnus to help review your application... ***you mustn't give up, the most important resource you have is your network... Reach out, you'll be so surprised how people will help you.***"

Want to discover more about networking? You can learn more about the importance of networking and how to network effectively from the YALI Network tools: [**Professional Networking 101**](#) & [**How to Have a Successful Informational Interview**](#).

Be Yourself

Honestly and effectively representing yourself is essential

Your personality and your attitude are an important part of who you are, and you should let that shine through in your application. The YALI Network spoke to 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow Pokyes Richard Sati to find out more about the importance of being yourself and being honest in your application.



Pokyes Richard Sati

Country: **Nigeria**

Fellowship track: **Business**

Applied for the Fellowship 4 times before being accepted

Pokyes Richard Sati is currently the CEO and managing director of FreeMINDs Bumper Harvest Limited, the major producer of POCL potato chips, potato flour, and frozen chips in Nigeria's Plateau State. Pokyes envisions expanding his production factory, employing more women, and empowering more youth with skills in agribusiness and business development.

"To those who have applied multiple times I'd say be patient, be persistent, and know what you're doing actually; be **real with yourself**. Don't [exaggerate] what you do, but give real statistics that can be verifiable."

"[As I kept applying] one thing I did was to trim down my application, because there were some figures I [exaggerated] before, and I had to keep trimming them down to my **real achievement**."

"Being real is one of the things that YALI is looking for, your work will always speak for you, you don't need to stretch yourself."

You can learn more about how to effectively represent yourself from the YALI Network tool [Common CV & Resume Mistakes](#) and the YALI Network Online Course [Strategies for Personal Growth & Development](#).

Want more tips and advice? Make sure you check out all the YALI Network blog posts on the [Mandela Washington Fellowship Application](#).